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SUBJECT: NATO/HLTF MEETING, JUNE 28 2007

REF: (A) HLTF-N(2007) 0033-NATO STATEMENT (B) STATE  
089390 (GUIDANCE)

Classified By: Classified by VCI DAS and U.S. HLTF Representative Karin  
[1](#)L. Look for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The all-day HLTF June 28 was focused on both assessing the Extraordinary Conference June 12-15, 2007 and preparing to deal with the likelihood that Russia may soon trigger a 150 day countdown to suspension of performance of its CFE obligations or (less likely) of Russia,s suspension or withdrawal from the CFE Treaty. This information from the NATO SYG-President Putin meeting on June 26 also included news that Russia would &correct8 its delay of CFE inspections (by Bulgaria, Hungary and the U.S.). Led by U.S. HLTF Rep Look and UK Rep Tissot, HLTF deliberations resulted in agreement on a NATO statement (ref A) that would be issued in response to a notification of Russian action on suspension of (or withdrawal from) the CFE Treaty, reaffirming the high value NATO Allies place on the CFE regime and their respective commitments to it, expressing the hope that Russia will join in constructive and creative dialogue, including at an Extraordinary Conference (EC), and calling for continued implementation of Treaty obligations. This statement will be updated as appropriate when Russia issues a statement or letter. Allies generally agreed on the way ahead, although several including Germany, France, and Italy were reluctant to commit to including in the statement a reference to calling for another Extraordinary Conference (EC). In their view, any EC this fall needs to have a positive component so that we can lure Russia into continued adherence to the Treaty. While all Allies indicated continued support for the NATO position as articulated at the Extraordinary Conference, it is clear that some are thinking of how to move beyond it, rather than make good on it. There was a shared concern, however, about the future of Europe,s cornerstone agreement and a recognition that the months ahead will be challenging. The date for the next HLTF meeting was left open pending more information about Russia,s actions. End Summary.

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Meetings on the Margins  
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[1](#)2. (C) Meetings on the Margins. U.S. HLTF Rep DAS Karin L. Look and team held a number of meetings with Allies while in Brussels, in addition to the all-day June 28 HLTF, including:

-- Hungary and Bulgaria, June 27: Discussion focused on Russia,s effective denial of recent requests for CFE

inspections due to a force majeure situation.<sup>8</sup> Drawing on ref (b), Look outlined the U.S. objectives for the upcoming HLTF meeting. Both reps welcomed the discussion, stressed the importance of Alliance unity in responding to any Russian actions, and were generally supportive of the overall U.S. approach.

-- Canada and Romania, June 27. Both were supportive of the overall U.S. approach and Canada especially stressed the need for NATO to make clear to Russia the benefits it would lose under the CFE Treaty and the Adapted Treaty (if/when it goes into force) if it suspends or withdraws. Additionally, Canada highlighted the importance of working with other States Parties, such as Azerbaijan which has threatened its own suspension if Russia makes good on its threats.

-- Turkey, June 27. At the regular U.S.-Turkey pre-HLTF meeting Turkish Rep Gun emphasized the importance of continued alliance solidarity in the face of Russian pressure tactics and wedge-driving, and the need to press on the Istanbul commitments. Regarding suggestions that when and if the Adapted CFE Treaty comes into force, States Parties can reconsider the flank, Turkish Rep opined that we should not give out wrong signals. The flank limitations are important for Turkey and the Alliance as a whole. As for hints about leaping over the Adapted Treaty to negotiate a new regime, Turkish Rep Gun was highly skeptical that an entirely new agreement could ever be reached. Gun agreed with U.S. Rep Look's suggestion to pre-position an Alliance statement in response to Russia's next steps, which would require instructions from Ankara with regard to the issue of requesting another Extraordinary Conference. Turkey also disclosed that their legal advisors had concluded that a Russian moratorium would constitute a material breach of Treaty obligations.

-- UK, June 27. U.S. Rep Look and deputy Jennifer Laurendeau met on Wednesday evening with U.K Rep Philip Tissot regarding the UK draft statement for the HLTF meeting the following day. In addition to sharing and agreeing on a few changes to the draft, they discussed the EC and the likely upcoming challenges to CFE.

-- Norway, June 28. In an informal meeting following the HLTF, Look, Laurendeau, and CFE expert James Starkey emphasized that the U.S. has not forgotten commitments it made at the time of the 1996 flank agreement to consult with Norway on flank issues when there were important developments with respect to that regime. The two teams brainstormed on avenues for NATO flexibility on CFE, short of changing our position of principle on fulfillment of Istanbul commitments. Discussion focused on the position of the Baltics in CFE (flank or non-flank; equipment limits/territorial ceilings), Russia's desire to eliminate specific legal limitations on its flank forces, and possible political commitments. Norway emphasized that a unified Alliance position on the way ahead was critical.

13. (C) Quad Meeting (U.S., UK, France, Germany). At the French-hosted June 28 Quad Meeting in advance of the HLTF, all agreed that while Russia's unwillingness to engage at the Extraordinary Conference was disappointing, it was not surprising; Russian Rep Antonov seemed to be going through the motions,<sup>8</sup> in spite of NATO's forward-looking proposals. The fact that we were able to maintain Alliance solidarity was nonetheless important in signaling resolve, as well as a willingness to have a dialogue. In looking forward, all agreed on the importance of maintaining NATO unity, as well as on the value of being more proactive. French Rep Grand argued that NATO should seek to set the agenda, and outlined two ways forward: success in fulfilling some aspects of the Istanbul commitments (i.e., internationalize PKF in Moldova), and presenting new proposals. German Rep Biontino expressed alarm at the hardening Russian position, counseling against counterproductive steps and urging patience and openness to preserve the CFE regime. U.S. Rep Look demurred, arguing that there is nothing alarming or fearful in the Russian position; we must remain steady and firm, but

not be alarmed. She agreed on the importance of maintaining the CFE regime, but not at any cost. Russia,s threats to suspend the CFE Treaty do not drive us to negotiate a new one Look said. Look pressed for reaching agreement at the HLTF on what to do in the immediate days ahead, including an agreement on elements for an Alliance statement to use in response to Russian actions, such as the foreshadowed letter, and the convening of another Extraordinary Conference in the Fall. France agreed with U.S. Rep Look that the Alliance not fall prey to Russian threats, and must look beyond the next three months.

14. (C) UK Rep Tissot tabled a draft for use by NATO in responding to Russia (as worked up before the meeting with U.S. Rep Look). The Quad fine-tuned the text, which was passed to the International Staff (IS) for their tabling at the HLTF meeting. Germany and France were not opposed to calling for an additional Extraordinary Conference, but said they could not commit without knowing what Russia would do next and without an exit strategy. Look, supported by the UK, pushed back, opining that the Treaty provided this mechanism to facilitate dialogue which would be needed if the Russians suspended implementation of the Treaty. The Quad agreed to include placeholder language to be worked by Deputies after knowing Russian next steps.

15. (C) Other issues discussed among the Quad were the possibility of a NATO-Russia Council proposal for an international peacekeeping force in Moldova as envisaged by the U.S. France proposed Alliance discussions. Options mentioned were: OSCE/RF; NRC; and EU/RF. Germany recalled that the EU would not agree on military options until there was a political settlement. U.S. Rep Look noted that development of an alternative PKF for Moldova was not within the HLTF,s purview, but urged that individual Allies take the message back to their capitals that some country or organization must step up to the plate to both lead and supply troops/civilians for an alternative PKF if it is to become something real that can help us all get Russia on board fulfilling its remaining commitments. Echoing comments by French Director of the MFA,s Department of Strategic Affairs, Security and Disarmament Phillipe Carre, French Rep Grand suggested Allies consider next future arms control steps that might involve leapfrogging the Adapted CFE Treaty. Look disagreed. German Rep Biontino shot back at Grand that there was very little prospect for meaningful future arms control that was not built on the CFE Treaty.

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HLTF: Contacts and Bilaterals  
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16. (C) NATO SYG,s meeting with Russian President Putin. The HLTF meeting commenced with an I.S. report on the meeting between the NATO SYG and Russian President Putin. I.S. reported that based on these discussions, it was clear that Putin was personally engaged on the CFE and Adapted Treaty issues. Putin told the SYG that the deferrals of CFE Treaty inspections by the Russian military was a mistake, an error that would be corrected. Russia would abide by the Treaty,s requirement to provide 150 day advance notification of suspension (or withdrawal). (Comment: The Russians have stated that they view the option of suspension as implicitly included within the Treaty provisions for withdrawal. End comment.) Grushko later clarified that a Russian letter to be circulated in the JCG would start the 150 day clock. The Dutch Rep (Netherlands is CFE Depositary) noted that while the CFE provided 150 days for a notification of withdrawal, which would also trigger an Extraordinary Conference in 21 days, there were no Treaty provisions for suspension. The I.S. legal expert explained that the Law of Treaties allows for temporary suspension under specific conditions. Turkey opined that according to their legal advice, to suspend Russia must be able to prove a violation by other States Parties; it is arguable that Russia can make such a case, since its own position is more political than legal.

17. (C) CFE Inspection Delays by Russia/Implementing the

Treaty. Hungary, Bulgaria, and the U.S. reported on the negative Russian responses to their respective requests for inspection, with U.S. Rep Look arguing forcefully the importance of all Allies continuing to implement the Treaty fully, and exercise their rights under the CFE Treaty regardless of what Russia does. Allies should protest Russian failures and keep a careful record to preserve all policy options in the event we need to respond to a Russian moratorium on CFE implementation. During the course of the meeting, Hungary, the U.S., and Bulgaria learned from capitals, and announced, that Russia just had notified that the conditions requiring the invocation of force majeure (used to delay inspections) had passed. Responding to U.S. Rep Look's point, Germany, Romania and Turkey indicated that they would proceed with their upcoming inspections as planned, and France and the UK jumped in to support Look's point as well. (As a result, national and IS experts met on the margins to slot in the three inspections, and deconflicted the inspection schedule.)

18. (C) Other Contacts. UK Rep reported Russian DFM Kislyak and Deputy NSC Chairman Nazurov took a tough line in a meeting with FCO Political Director, arguing that Russia's security concerns were being undermined, Russia was not being treated as a partner, the NRC doesn't work, and the CFE Treaty was being abused by NATO Parties. Spain reported on the recent Vienna OSCE/ASRC meetings held under its Chairmanship, circulated an information document, and proposed that the HLTF discuss a number of the on-going issues address therein so as to give advice to the NATO Caucus in Vienna. I.S. (Simmons) reported that Armenia raised with him concerns regarding Azerbaijan's plans to exercise force majeure and suspend the CFE, if Russia does.

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HLTF: Assessment of the Extraordinary Conference  
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19. (C) Almost all Allies that spoke to this item (Germany, U.S., Turkey, UK, France, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Poland, Norway, Canada, Slovakia, Luxembourg) stressed the importance of maintaining Alliance unity, and the positive approach demonstrated by the Alliance with its proposal for a final document, which seemed to catch Russia unaware. There was shared disappointment that Russia did not seem interested or prepared to engage on substance, but rather seemed to be marking time. U.S. Rep Look pointed to the mixed message emanating from Russia: is Russia really interested in bringing the Adapted Treaty into force, or are both CFE Treaty and the Adapted Treaty so humiliating that it is really seeking another regime (without either Istanbul commitments or flank limitations)? The Turkish Rep stated that the Russian desire for a renegotiated adapted Treaty was unworkable; nothing better than the Adapted Treaty was achievable. Suggesting that Russia was seeking to absolve itself of its Istanbul commitments and flank limitations, he also made a passionate pitch for retention of flank limits, noting that it was not just a numerical issue (pockets of rivalries, frozen conflicts are all flank issues) nor was it just a Turkish issue. Norway agreed. France's suggestion that Allies think how to impose their own agenda was followed by an Italian proposal, supported by the Netherlands, Slovakia, Norway, Luxembourg, and later Belgium, to develop a roadmap containing new ideas for presentation to Russia to avoid further deterioration. (Note: On the margins, Norway and Slovakia clarified their positions, stating that the roadmap could not dilute the principles behind flank limitations and host nation consent. End Note.) We should go beyond repetition and well-known formulas and try something new, the Italian Rep opined. In the subsequent discussion on the way ahead, both U.S. and UK Reps said no to a new roadmap, but yes to dialogue. Both indicated it was too soon to leap to the conclusion that we should bend to Russia's demands. Germany later recalled its almost year-old proposal for a roadmap had not been supported within the Alliance; some strategic thinking is needed. (Comment: The German roadmap was opposed because, among other failings, it was an ill-disguised attempt to revise the substance of

the Istanbul commitments. End Comment.)

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HLTF: Way Ahead  
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¶10. (C) Meeting of Legal Experts: Not Yet. The IS clarified its proposed legal discussion on CFE as an informal discussion among legal experts to exchange views; it was not designed to report consensual advice to the HLTF. Germany (which opposed the meeting of experts proposed for the 28th) said that it doesn't preclude a legal discussion, but such a meeting would need a defined mandate and task, and not deal in the hypothetical. Supporting an informal exchange, U.S. Rep Look picked up on Turkey's earlier comment that while the lawyers will inform us regarding what we could do, decisions at the end of the day will be political; Belgian Rep agreed. The French Rep admitted that France had no legal expert familiar with the Treaty and that a meeting of legal experts would not be their usual practice. He suggested as an alternative that HLTF Reps simply come to the next meeting armed with legal opinions. The IS said it would return to this question at a later date.

¶11. (C) Way Ahead: Discussion. After summarizing the state of play, the Chair suggested Allies focus on two issues ) a statement the IS will circulate that could be made by the Alliance and/or in the JCG regarding Russian actions, and when to call an Extraordinary Conference. Drawing on ref (b), U.S. HLTF Rep Look outlined key elements of a proposed NATO strategy including: continue to implement the treaty; be proactive and steady; provide a unified response to a Russian letter, and request an Extraordinary Conference with our own agenda, which could signal positive engagement with Russia. She pressed for agreement on a NATO statement that could be used, as appropriate, upon receipt of the Russian letter. Although supportive of the need to react to the Russian letter, Germany and France were not prepared to commit to an EC before knowing what would be in Putin's letter. The Dutch Rep argued that an EC should be called only when it is clear that it will be successful; U.S. Rep Look disagreed, rejoining that an EC was a Treaty mechanism not to be feared but to be used to further the dialogue and our message. While an EC would be dependent on the text and content of President Putin's letter, French Rep agreed with the U.S. that an EC was not a dramatic event, but should be approached with caution and could be a contributing element for the future. UK supported Look, noting that resuming a dialogue with Russia will require a further EC to formally engage.

¶12. (SBU) Seminars: Recalling its proposal for an informal discussion on the CFE Treaty and the Agreement on Adaptation, German Rep noted that such a discussion will only work if others, including Russia, think it would be useful; such a seminar should not be held in Vienna. U.S. HLTF Rep Look cautioned that various seminar proposals for this fall should be approached with a dose of reality; brainstorming on future conventional arms control did not make sense at a time when Russia is considering a moratorium on CFE implementation. France recalled that the Russian, German, French proposed FSC Arms Control Seminar is still in the works. The FSC is broader than JCG and outside the HLTF jurisdiction; it will not be a CFE Treaty discussion. Obviously, the French and German sponsors will need to hear from Russia that they want to keep the exercise going. Responding to the earlier Spanish Report noting upcoming seminars, the IS commented that, until the Russia letter is made public, it is difficult to take a decision on how to take proposals forward, noting that sponsors like Germany and France can keep the IS and HLTF posted.

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HLTF: Alliance Statement  
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¶13. (C) The IS circulated a draft statement for discussion and agreement (note: as indicated in para 3 above this



statement was provided to the I.S. by the UK following the earlier Quad discussions). The statement was worked by the HLTF over the course of several hours. It was agreed to leave a placeholder to include a sentence or two responding to the Russian letter, once it is known. The only really problematic issue was the U.S. and UK proposal for another Extraordinary Conference this fall, and language leaving open the possibility was finally agreed to refer to capitals. The text (ref a) was agreed to ad ref at the HLTF and placed under a 48-hour silence procedure, on the understanding that HLTF Deputies will meet within 24-48 hours after the Russian letter has emerged to fill in placeholder language. It was agreed that the statement can be used at NATO Headquarters, in the JCG in Vienna, and in public as appropriate.(NOTE: Silence was not broken on July 2nd so the statement stands agreed and ready for deputies to update when appropriate)

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NATO-Russia Council  
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¶14. (SBU) The International Staff reported that it has been holding July 19 for an NRC/ACE (Arms Control Experts) meeting and asked if Allies were interested. U.S. HLTF Look,s response that, should Russia ask for a meeting we should have it, but not press for one ourselves, prevailed.

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Next HLTF Meeting  
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¶15. (SBU) Dates for the next HLTF meeting were left open, recognizing that events beyond NATO control will be influential in determining when the next meeting will be held. In principle, all agreed that as usual we will have an HLTF in September.  
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